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Brachial plexus injury

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Overview

By Mayo Clinic Staff

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The brachial plexus is the network of nerves that sends signals from your spine to your shoulder, arm and hand. A brachial plexus injury occurs when these nerves are stretched, compressed, or in the most serious cases, ripped apart or torn away from the spinal cord.

Minor brachial plexus injuries, known as stingers or burners, are common in contact sports, such as football. Babies sometimes sustain brachial plexus injuries during birth. Other conditions, such as inflammation or tumors, may affect the brachial plexus.

The most severe brachial plexus injuries usually result from auto or motorcycle accidents. Severe brachial plexus injuries can leave your arm paralyzed, with a loss of function and sensation. Surgical procedures such as nerve grafts, nerve transfers or muscle transfers can help restore function.

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